

**CALIFORNIA WILDLIFE HABITAT RELATIONSHIPS SYSTEM**  
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M055 Yellow-pine Chipmunk *Neotamias amoenus*  
Family: Sciuridae Order: Rodentia Class: Mammalia

Written by: T. Harvey, C. Polite  
Reviewed by: M. White  
Edited by: M. White, C. Polite

#### DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

Common yearlong resident of open stands of most coniferous forest habitats, montane hardwood, montane hardwood-conifer, pinyon-juniper, and many Great Basin shrub habitats from the central Sierra Nevada north to the Cascade Ranges, Modoc Plateau, and Warner Mts.

#### SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

**Feeding:** Yellow-pine chipmunks primarily are herbivorous. They eat seeds of conifers, shrubs, forbs, and grasses; they also take fungi, fruit, and insects. Forage on the ground, and also in trees and shrubs. Carry food in cheek pouches to caches in burrows for use in winter (Broadbooks 1958).

**Cover:** These chipmunks utilize intermediate and low canopy-cover stages in forest habitats, and intermediate and dense stages in shrub habitats. Require shrubs, ground litter, rocks, snags, stumps, and logs for resting cover.

**Reproduction:** These chipmunks nest in logs, stumps, snags, rock crevices, or in burrows.

**Water:** These chipmunks probably meet their water needs from food.

**Pattern:** Suitable habitat for yellow-pine chipmunks is in areas of open, brushy forest with a ground cover of rocks, shrubs, forbs, and litter. Scattered sources of water enhance the habitat.

#### SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

**Activity Patterns:** Diurnal; become torpid in their burrows during winter, and may arouse occasionally to feed on stored food (Maser et al. 1981).

**Seasonal Movements/Migration:** Non-migratory.

**Home Range:** Home range in the Cascades averaged 0.4 to 1.5 ha (1.0 to 3.8 ac) (Broadbooks 1970). In Alberta, male home range averaged 1.3 ha (3.2 ac) and varied from 0.4 to 2.8 ha (1.0 to 6.9 ac); female home range averaged 0.6 ha (1.4 ac) and varied from 0.1 to 1.1 ha (0.2 to 2.7 ac) (Sheppard 1972).

**Territory:** Apparently defend only the vicinity of the den.

**Reproduction:** These chipmunks breed from April to late July. First births occur in May, most occur in June. Last lactation occurs in July. Gestation averages about 30 days. Litter

size 3-8; one litter per yr.

Niche: Potential predators include long-tailed weasels, bobcats, coyotes, minks, hawks, and owls. In California, this chipmunk is sympatric in portions of its range with 9 other species (*T. minimus*, *T. senex*, *T. sonomae*, *T. quadrimaculatus*, *T. speciosus*, *T. siskiyou*, *T. alpinus*, *T. panamintinus*, and *T. umbrinus*). Yellow-pine chipmunks often are found in association with golden-mantled ground squirrels.

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- Maser, C., B. R. Mate, J. F. Franklin, and C. T. Dyrness. 1981. Natural history of Oregon coast mammals. Pac. Northwest For. And Range Exp. Sta., USDA, For. Serv., Gen. Tech. Rep., PNW-133. 496pp.
- Sheppard, D. 1972. Home ranges of chipmunks (*Eutamias*) in Alberta. J. Mammal. 53:379-380. Intraspecific aggression, and may have a rate of 6.16 encounters per hr with conspecifics (Chappell 1978). An exclusive territory is not maintained, except perhaps around the nest. The home ranges of females are more exclusive than those of males.

Reproduction: Mating occurs March through April, with gestation lasting 28-30 days. Average litter size about 6, with single litter per yr most common. A second litter is possible if the first is lost (Skryja 1974). Young are born April through May and appear above ground in June to early July.

Niche: Small, diurnal omnivore. Competitively inferior to other chipmunk species, showing ecological release if other species are absent or removed. The least chipmunk is excluded from pinyon-juniper woodlands or conifer forests by *T. amoenus* or *T. speciosus* (Sheppard 1971, Meredith 1977, Chappell 1978). Probably competitively inferior to *T. panamintinus* and *T. umbrinus* as well. Adapted for arid habitats, which other chipmunks cannot tolerate. Predators include raptors, weasels, coyotes, foxes, and bobcats.

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